

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Woonsocket School District Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2006-2007

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Dates of On Site Visit: October 19, 2006

Date of Report: December 4, 2006

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

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|---------------------------|---|
| Promising Practice | The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices. |
| Meets Requirements | The district/agency consistently meets this requirement. |
| Needs Assistance | The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement and is out of compliance. |
| Needs Intervention | The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement and is out of compliance. |
| Not applicable | In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries. |

Principle 1 – General Supervision

General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Parent Surveys
- Teacher Surveys
- Student File Reviews
- Tables A, D, & H

Promising Practice

The Woonsocket School District operates two pre-schools for three and four year olds. The special education staff is available for observations and consults. The District receives referrals from the County Health Nurse, the Center for Disabilities Birth to 3 program and from local doctors. All referrals are evaluated. The steering committee found this to be a promising practice

Woonsocket has a small school with experienced elementary classroom teachers who regularly confer when they have a student experiencing learning problems. The district provides tutoring support as classroom teachers work one-on-one after school hours, and there is contracted clinical counseling for students experiencing more extensive difficulties. This was also deemed a promising practice by the steering committee.

Meets Requirements

The steering committee found that the Woonsocket School District meets requirement in Principle 1, as their comprehensive plan states the specific documentation that will be maintained for all child identification activities. They use local interagency agreements to assist in the identification of students with disabilities in the district. A referral form is used to document all special education referrals and the district policy is to meet with the parents, consider their concerns and together make the decision regarding evaluations. The district staff, including special education staff, participates in professional development offered by the Educational Service Agency (ESA) and the local district, district policy is revised to meet any new or revised policies/procedures regarding the development of the IEP, uses of behavioral interventions, and procedural safeguards.

Needs Improvement:

Based on parent and teacher surveys, the steering committee felt the district needs to provide a greater variety of professional development opportunities to its staff and to regularly survey the staff to see what their needs are. Based on teacher surveys, the committee agreed the district has not conducted local surveys and records of the results of the state survey have not been kept nor used in determining professional developments.

Validation Results

Promising Practice

During interviews with administration, it was verified that the Woonsocket school district does operate a free preschool that is unique in that not only is it open to all residents of the district; but also to any preschoolers who are in daycare settings in the district, even if they are from surrounding towns. This gives an opportunity for

early learning experiences to children who, due to their parents' employment in a town other than where they live, would not be able to attend a district run preschool. The monitoring team agreed that this is a promising practice.

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee in all areas they found to meet requirements. The help given to students is best practice and meets requirements. Through interviews and a review of the information gathered by the school it was determined that the district has provided both special education and regular education teachers with professional development opportunities in areas that meet the needs of the students. One special education teacher is under an authority to act but plans on taking the Praxis test and is aware of the limitations of her scope of practice.

Needs Intervention

ARSD 24:05:22:03 Certified child

A certified child is a child in need of special education or special education and related services who has received a multidisciplinary evaluation and has an individual education program formulated and approved by a local placement committee. Documentation supporting a child's disabling condition as defined by Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act must be maintained by the school district for verification of its annual federal child count. This definition applies to all eligible children ages 3 to 21, inclusive, and to only those children under the age of 3 who are in need of prolonged assistance.

Based on the evaluations given, the monitoring team was unable to verify eligibility or educational impact for a child currently being served. When student number 9 was reevaluated in February of 2006, the results of the behavior scales that were administered indicated no significant areas of concern; furthermore, there was no current functional information to support the placement decision. This child did not meet the criteria for 505. The district needs to conduct a comprehensive evaluation in all areas of suspected disability and determine eligibility and educational need.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Parent Surveys
- Data Table I
- Student File Reviews

Promising Practice:

No students have been suspended or expelled. District provides one-on-one tutoring and has contracted for clinical counseling as preventive measures.

Meets Requirements

The steering committee agreed that the district provides FAPE to all eligible children with disabilities. There are no private schools in the district. The handbook is read and explained to all students on the first day of school and each student is given a copy. Behavior interventions are identified in the IEP and counseling services are available for students who have a need for this intervention. There is an established district plan that assures FAPE is available to students with disabilities who are suspended or expelled.

Validation Results**Promising Practice:**

The monitoring team feels that while no students have been suspended or expelled; interviews with staff did not validate the relationship of this to the preventative measures of tutoring and contracted counseling. There is no data that would support this as a promising practice; therefore this is an area that meets requirements

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee data for Principle Two, Free Appropriate Public Education as meeting the requirements.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Data sources used:

- Student File Reviews
- State Tables E
- Parent Surveys

Meets Requirements

Based on file reviews and parent surveys, the steering committee found that the prior notice document used by the district contains all required content. Classroom teachers provide input and areas to be evaluated are determined by a "team" of people including the referring person, special education teacher, parent, school

psychologist and administrator. The school district ensures that reevaluations are conducted every three years.

Needs Improvement:

The District needs to provide functional assessment training to its staff and more specific documentation needs to be gathered and kept in the file.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that Woonsocket School District provides appropriate written notice and obtains informed consent before assessments are administered to a child as part of an evaluation or reevaluation.

Needs Assistance

ARSD 24:05:25:04. Evaluation procedures. School districts shall ensure, at a minimum, that evaluation procedures include the following: A variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional and developmental information about the child, including information from the parents.

(5) A variety of assessment tools and strategies are used to gather relevant functional and development information about the child, including information provided by the parents, that may assist in determining:

- (a) Whether the child is a child with a disability; and
- (b) The content of the child's IEP, including information related to enabling the child:
 - (i) To be involved in and progress in the general curriculum; or
 - (ii) For a preschool child, to participate in appropriate activities;

The monitoring team found that although Woonsocket School District does provide written notice and obtains consent before assessments are administered to a child as part of an evaluation or reevaluation, the district does not consistently evaluate students in all areas of disability. Three files (students 3, 8, and 9) did not have functional information as a part of the comprehensive evaluation. The team agrees that the district needs assistance in the area of functional assessment.

ARSD 24:05:30:04. Prior notice and parent consent. Informed parental consent must be obtained before conducting a first-time evaluation, reevaluation, and before initial placement of a child in a program providing special education or special education and related services.

The monitoring team found that student # 9 was evaluated using cognitive and functional information pulled forward; however the prior notice to the parent did not indicate that this was to happen. There was no prior notice for an addendum meeting for student # 1. The team feels that the Woonsocket School District needs assistance in the area of providing complete prior notices.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- File Reviews
- Parent Rights booklet
- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan

Meets Requirements

The steering committee, based on file reviews, found that the parent rights brochure checked in file reviews used by the district contains all required content and is presented in the parent's native language. They also agree that parents have an opportunity to review their child's educational records, and are provided a copy of the IEP. Confidentiality is adhered to and policies and procedures in place for responding to complaints, and/or to requests for due process hearings.

Needs Improvement

The district has never had the occasion to need a surrogate parent; however there is currently no list of names that would be willing to serve as surrogate parents.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee in the areas they felt met requirements in Principle Four.

Needs Assistance

ARSD 24:05:30:15. Surrogate parents. Each school district shall establish procedures for the assignment of a surrogate parent to ensure that the rights of the child are protected if no parent can be identified and the district, after reasonable effort, cannot discover the whereabouts of a parent or if the child is a ward of the state. At a minimum, the district's method for determining whether a child needs a surrogate parent must include the following: (1) The identification of staff members at the district or building level responsible for referring students in need of a surrogate parent; (2) The provision of in-service training on the criteria in this

section for determining whether a child needs a surrogate parent; and (3) The establishment of a referral system within the district for the appointment of a surrogate parent.

The monitoring team concurred with the steering committee that Woonsocket School District does not have anyone in the district trained as a surrogate parent.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- File Reviews
- Parents Rights Booklet
- Surveys

Meets Requirements

When the steering committee addressed the requirements for Principle 5 they found that Woonsocket School District uses a prior notice form that includes all required content and IEP teams have appropriate membership. The IEP's contain measurable short- term objectives that include the conditions, performance and criteria with goals linked to the present levels of performance. IEPs are reviewed annually and are held within timelines and parents receive a copy of the IEP. By the time a student is 16, the district begins appropriate transition planning for individual students.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that Woonsocket School District uses a prior notice form that includes all required content, IEP teams have appropriate membership, and by the time a student is 16, the district begins appropriate transition planning for individual students.

Needs Assistance

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program. Each student's individualized education program shall include:

(1) A statement of the student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, including:

(a) How the student's disability affects the student's involvement and progress in the general education curriculum (i.e., the same curriculum as for nondisabled students);

The projected date for the beginning of the services and modification described in this section and the anticipated frequency, location, and duration of those services and modifications.

The monitoring team noted that the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance was not linked to functional information gathered during the evaluation in four of the files (students 3, 7, 9, and 9). Statements on the IEP's in the files of students 1, 2, 3, and 9 that dealt with the anticipated frequency, location, and duration of services and modifications did not cover all required areas. The monitoring team determined the district needs assistance in these two areas.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Table F
- Teacher Surveys
- File Reviews
- Comprehensive Plan

Meets Requirements

The steering committee found that special education program (goals and objectives) are developed prior to concluding placement on the continuum of least restrictive environments.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

Based on interviews with staff and administrators, the Woonsocket School District is making an effort to provide services in the regular classroom setting for all students. The monitoring team concurs with the steering committee that Woonsocket School District meets requirements in the area of least restrictive environment.